

Mcgowan, Leticia D

From: Lisa LeMaster <lisa@lemastergroup.com>
Sent: Sunday, June 16, 2013 8:53 PM
To: Kevin Smelker; Miles, Mike
Subject: tough on Jones letter.docx
Attachments: tough on Jones letter.docx

This is your punishment for making me watch the meetings from last August and last week. A new letter....that is very tough on Jones. Take a look and let me know what you think.

BTW, in watching the tapes, there is a big difference on their behavior versus the City Council's behavior from the late '80s and early '90s. It's not as simple as showing video of meetings. Later.

Lisa LeMaster
lisa@lemastergroup.com
214.706.6000 (office)
214.315.3222 (mobile)
972.764.3277 (fax)
15455 North Dallas PKWY #600
Addison, TX 75001
www.lemastergroup.com

Please accept this letter of resignation as Chief of Operations for the Dallas Independent School District. I am making this decision with reluctance and regret but I have spent weeks in careful consideration of the situation here in Dallas.

I know you are disappointed, and I realize that you will wrongfully be blamed for my resignation.

My decision to leave, however, was completely confirmed after Thursday's board briefing that set an endurance record for impossible behavior by the board. Specifically, Elizabeth Jones's relentless and ridiculous questioning that was laden with a prosecutorial attitude and conduct on an issue she obviously doesn't understand.

In fact, her fellow board members had no idea what she was saying.

I have reviewed the seven and a half hour meeting tape; I still don't know what she was saying or asking.

I know that you believe Mr. Cowan will be able to lead and guide the board in this next stage of reform. I just don't have confidence that will happen.

My antenna about this issue was raised after another endurance test last August when Ms. Jones, in a vitriolic and unbelievably uninformed line of questioning wasted the Board's time on the P3 program. She challenged and chastised the District's expert and the firm's expertise, and unbelievably she could not present an alternative to the taxpayers and her fellow board members.

Mike, your leadership, courage, passion, and vision coupled with functional effective and professional staff governance are tremendous assets for the students, community, and staff of the Dallas Independent School District. Although earlier voluntary departures of Cabinet members were not explained, I can confidently say that most of the resignations were linked to the extraordinarily difficult working relationships, or lack thereof, with the Board of Trustees.

Quite simply, while Cabinet members admire your tenacity and vision, many have left because they do not want to continue working in an environment where members of the Board of Trustees behave in a dysfunctional and disrespectful manner. Not only are they unable to operate appropriately and effectively as a policy-making board, they also are often hostile and belittling toward dedicated and talented professionals and staff who often are here at great personal cost to their careers and families

I have worked in public education for many decades and have never encountered a more volatile (and out of control?) board than the one in which I have worked under for the past year. I addressed Ms. Jones's behavior, but the environment is one of intimidation and threats, and individual Board members (often) treat the staff members in a disdainful and unprofessional manner.

For example, some board members regularly chastise professional employees, in public and private, as well as outside expert consultants. There have been times when certain board members have tried to influence the selection of a vendor. In addition, some regularly shout and berate staff members as we saw during the principal evaluation process. Regularly, board members attempt to get involved in operations issues, even as routine as janitorial services.

At some point, one has to ask, as I'm sure my former colleagues did, is this job worth it, especially when opportunities for better jobs in positive workplaces are plentiful in education and business? For me, the answer is no. I admire your fortitude and commitment, and I am hopeful, but not optimistic, that you will be able to accomplish great results here.

This is a great city, and a year ago I believed my family would relocate here. The situation saddens me because the elected board members and district leadership should be on the same side fighting to improve schools for the children, and I see no signs of that changing.

I hope I am wrong.

Thank you for your long-term confidence in me. I do hope we will be able to work together again in the future.

Sincerely,

Kevin C. Smelker

Mcgowan, Leticia D

From: Lisa LeMaster <lisa@lemastergroup.com>
Sent: Sunday, June 16, 2013 9:00 PM
To: Kevin Smelker; Miles, Mike
Subject: Recall: tough on Jones letter.docx

Lisa LeMaster would like to recall the message, "tough on Jones letter.docx".

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